



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

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PROBE INTO BAY AREA ANTIQUE STORES WIDENS

Federal agents execute six warrants searching for counterfeit designer furniture

SAN FRANCISCO – For the second time in less than a month, federal agents executed search warrants at a string of antique shops in Union Square and Fisherman’s Wharf, this time seeking evidence that the businesses illegally imported and sold counterfeit designer furniture and house wares.

Today’s operation, involving agents from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), targeted five antique shops as well as a warehouse used by the businesses. The locations included Lloyd’s Fine Art & Jewelry at 229 Jefferson Street; King’s Fine Art and Antiques at 51 Jefferson Street; King’s Fine Art and Antiques Showroom on Powell Street; Gioia Fine Art at 238 Stockton Street; and Buckingham Palace Fine Art at 441 Sutter Street.

According to court documents, ICE is investigating allegations that the businesses violated intellectual property rights laws by trafficking in counterfeit Versace furniture, dinnerware, and art objects. The search warrant affidavit details how a New York-based buyer for Versace who is assisting ICE in the investigation visited three of the shops earlier this month posing as a prospective customer. The affidavit describes how store personnel at each location showed the woman numerous items bearing the designer’s trademarked Medusa head design and represented that they were made by Versace. According to the affidavit, an invoice for more than \$36,000 seized during the searches earlier this month showed an order for “versace furniture” made out to a company in China. The legitimate vendor of Versace furniture is headquartered in Switzerland.

“The trafficking of counterfeit goods is a global enterprise that robs legitimate companies of billions of dollars in revenues every year,” said Charles DeMore, ICE special agent-in-charge of ICE investigations in San Francisco. “What’s more, these sales generate profits that often go to support other types of criminal activity.”

During today’s searches, federal agents seized numerous items, including furniture, records, and documents that will be reviewed as part of an ongoing investigation into possible intellectual property rights violations.

Today’s enforcement action comes less than three weeks after federal agents executed search warrants involving the same antique shops targeted today and six related locations. During the searches January 5, agents were seeking evidence of financial, immigration, and endangered species violations. In addition to seizing records and documents, ICE agents arrested 28 foreign nationals

who were illegally employed by the businesses. The case is being investigated by ICE, the IRS-CI, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the FBI.

Members of the public who have information that may be helpful to the investigation are asked to send an email to Antiques@ci.irs.gov

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.